

financial pressure, and put safeguards in place to ensure those sanctions are not wrongfully lifted.

It would also require the President to establish a task force to develop long-term solutions for providing reliable internet service to the people of Cuba that is not censored or blocked by the Cuban regime.

As the Cuban people's fight for freedom from the oppressive and illegitimate communist Cuban regime continues, the United States must stand for the Cuban democracy.

We can never bow to dictators—never. It is time for Biden to lead and to oppose those genocidal dictators and support human rights.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session for a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO KEITH LAWRENCE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, after more than 50 years as a pillar of Owensboro, KY, news media, Keith Lawrence is retiring. As the Messenger-Inquirer's longest tenured reporter, Keith was his community's ever-present voice, covering stories that ranged from local businesses to U.S. Presidents. As the city's mayor put so well, Keith "will be hard to replace." Today, I ask my colleagues to join me in honoring Keith in his retirement.

Keith has written for one newspaper or another since September 1963, when he first discovered his passion for journalism in high school. He cut his teeth during his undergraduate years at Murray State University writing for the Murray State News. After graduating, Keith entered the military, stationing in Fort Hood, TX. Loathe to give up any opportunity to write, he helped publish newsletters on base and worked at the post's newspaper.

Following his military service and some short stints at a series of weeklies, Keith and his wife Sandy made their way to Owensboro, where he began his extensive career at the Messenger-Inquirer in 1972. Though he has covered local, State, and national stories, community journalism always remained his top priority. Keith felt he needed to be the "eyes and ears" of his readers.

Keith's journalistic gifts have earned him fans both in Owensboro and across the wider Commonwealth. He recently received the Mayor's Award for Excel-

lence for his commitment to community coverage and joined the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame.

Throughout my time in office, Keith has been a constant at any of the events I held in Owensboro. He asked insightful questions, squarely focused on how my work in the Senate affected his city.

Though he is taking a step back from his position at the Messenger-Inquirer, Keith plans to continue his column and write news stories as a freelancer. Anyone who knows Keith shouldn't be surprised. He will always live and breathe community journalism. For Keith, his work with the Messenger-Inquirer was more than just a job; it gave him a home in which his family flourished and provided a deep bond to his city.

In honor of Keith's retirement, I would like to thank him for his service to the Commonwealth and persistent loyalty to strong local journalism. He has delivered an invaluable service to Owensboro residents for more than 50 years.

The Messenger-Inquirer paid tribute to Keith's career in a recent article. I ask unanimous consent that the article be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From Messenger-Inquirer, July 8, 2022]

"LAWRENCE RETIRING AFTER 50 YEARS"

Keith Lawrence, the Messenger-Inquirer's longest-tenured reporter, is retiring after more than 50 years with the newspaper.

Lawrence, 75, is a Ballard County native who found a journalism career and home in Owensboro.

He joined the staff in January 1972. Since then, he's covered everything from mom-and-pop businesses to U.S. presidents.

According to Lawrence, being a journalist is all he ever wanted to do since discovering it in high school.

"When I was a freshman, my English teacher asked us to write poetry . . . and whatever I wrote she took across the hall to the journalism teacher and asked her to run it in the (school) newspaper—and they did," Lawrence said. "She told me I should take journalism next year. I didn't think I could do any of that stuff, but I did it and fell in love with it.

"I've been writing for some kind of newspaper since September 1963."

While in that journalism class, he met his wife, Sandy, whom he married a year after graduating from high school.

Sandy Lawrence said it was journalism that brought her husband out of his shell.

"Keith is really a shy person," she said. "But it was being a reporter that allowed him to talk to anyone."

Lawrence pursued his newfound passion at Murray State University, where he would write for the Murray State News and eventually earn his bachelor's degree in journalism and master's degree in communications.

In February 1970, Lawrence received his draft notice for the Vietnam War, but he was allowed to graduate from college before entering the military.

Lawrence was sent to Fort Hood, Texas, where he furthered his journalism talents by working on the post's newspaper.

Although he did spend time writing newsletters, Lawrence said he took on heavier stories that would help him later in civilian life.

"We did a lot of things that weren't fluff pieces," he said. "We investigated off-post housing. People would buy up an old army barracks and turn it into eight apartments. These were World War II army barracks, and people were being charged outrageous rents."

Lawrence was honorably discharged after less than two years and began looking for a journalism job.

His first attempt was working for a start-up shopper—a free weekly community paper—in Erin, Tennessee.

"It lasted about two months and we quit," Lawrence said. "We were working about 80 hours a week. We were salary and didn't get any overtime."

That's when Lawrence reached out to Murray to see if anyone there was aware of any newspaper openings.

Lawrence said there was a weekly in Benton and a daily in Owensboro that were hiring.

"I had enough of weekly newspapers so I applied up here," he said.

Prior to his starting at the Messenger-Inquirer on Jan. 24, 1972, Lawrence had only made two brief visits to Owensboro—once in high school and during a plane layover from basic training.

And when he and his wife, Sandy, moved to the city, Lawrence said he didn't think it would be permanent.

"I thought two years and I'd go look for something else," he said.

Five decades later, Lawrence has written countless stories and planted roots in Owensboro. The Lawrences have one son—Christopher—who's a writer for the Las Vegas Review-Journal.

In his time with the Messenger-Inquirer, Lawrence not only covered local and state stories but also national ones.

Among them were the 1988 Republican and Democratic conventions and the first inauguration of U.S. President Bill Clinton in 1993. He also spent a week with U.S. Sen. Wendell Ford in Washington, D.C., before he retired.

But for Lawrence, it has been community journalism that mattered most; knowing he was supposed to be the "eyes and ears" of the readers was something he took seriously.

"I always wanted to know why somebody was the way they were," he said.

On Thursday, Mayor Tom Watson presented the Mayor's Award for Excellence to Lawrence in appreciation for his coverage of community issues.

"He always treated the city and all of us fair," Watson said. ". . . Keith will be hard to replace. The stories he tells are accurate, and you don't have to worry about him editorializing your comments."

It was last year that Lawrence's dedication to his craft was recognized by his being inducted into the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame.

For Lawrence, it was an accolade that capped off his career.

"It's definitely the pinnacle," he said.

As a journalist, Lawrence has a unique writing style that is concise but still manages to convey all the pertinent information, said Matt Francis, Messenger-Inquirer executive editor.

He also has a work ethic that is unmatched, having never taken a sick day in 50-plus years at the paper, and the ability to cover multiple areas from business to government to entertainment, Francis said.

"But what truly sets Keith apart is his ability to keenly understand this community and the readers of this newspaper," Francis said. "They feel a connection with him, as he does with them, and I think he always understood what a privilege it is to be a part of informing and entertaining a community